THE QUIVER

Saturday, April 23, 1870.

"So Jane and Grace brought out their well-filled portfolios."—p. 451.

TWO YEARS.

A TALE OF TO-DAY. BY THE AUTHOR OF "ESTHER WEST," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER IX.—"WANTED."

MR. PALMER'S next business was to find a suitable home for Nelly. For six succeeding days the following advertisement appeared in the papers:—

WANTED, for a Young Lady, a HOME in a Private Establishment, where she can have the advantages of private tuition. Terms liberal. Apply personally at ——, between the hours of two and four.

For the first three days nothing came of it, and Mr.

Palmer waited impatiently in a room hired for the purpose at the place he had appointed. On the fourth day he had several applications. More than one governess past the age which employers care to engage, was willing to go into lodgings with the young lady; but none of them satisfied the shrewd North-countryman, who trusted to the seeing of his eyes and the hearing of his ears in most things.

At last, on the sixth day, a lady made her appearance with whom he at once felt that he might seriously treat. He could detect the Northern accent in her voice, and her face indicated character and energy. She was not dressed, as most of them were, with ostentatious quietness, but evidently in accordance with her natural taste. She had gold spectacles over her clear but short-sighted grey eyes; her bright hair was turning grey, but her cheek was still fresh, and the teeth pearly white, when the small firm mouth disclosed them. There was no obsequiousness in her manners; on the contrary, they were slightly brusque, though not wanting in courtesy. Miss Macnaughten was Scotch. She began by announcing this fact.

"No objection," returned the manufacturer; "I am myself from the North."

"I am educating my brother's children," said the lady. "They were sent to me from India when they were little ones, and I could undertake another young lady along with them. I am fond of independence, or I need not do this; but the boys have left me already, and the girls are growing up, and I want more to do. My references are from family friends;" and she named one or two leading savants. "I must add," she continued, "that I could not receive the young lady unless her character and manners are such as will admit of her associating with my girls. My terms are £150 per annum."

Mr. Palmer replied by giving an account of Nelly's parentage, his own position, and his adoption of her as his son's wife. "As for her," he said, "you will find her a well-mannered, pretty girl. I do not know about accomplishments, but she writes a fair business-like hand, and is an excellent accountant."

Miss Macnaughten smiled. "A very good foundation," she replied, "but if she has no accomplishments but these, I fear two years of the hardest work will not be enough. Music, if she has not been taught before, will be impossible."

"So much the better," Mr. Palmer replied. "I would like her to become a well-informed, capable woman, not a musician. I shouldn't object if she spent the two years reading the *Times*, if she could understand it from beginning to end by that time."

Miss Macnaughten was delighted. She liked originality, and here was an original man, who had exactly her own views about a girl's education. He belonged to a great class, whose female members had taken anything but a fair share of social influence and duty. She longed to undertake Nelly, and make her a model of a middle-class lady. But this was far enough from Mr. Palmer's view. He would have scouted the idea of social influence and duty, but he had an impatience of domestic incapacity, and the misrule attending it; and the insipid frivolity of the wives of most of the men he had known disgusted him. He was intensely domestic, and he saw these men becoming less and less so—the women left to themselves to dress and chatter, while they attended to their own business, and sought their own pleasures. He liked to find his pleasure at home, and to bring his business there too if he liked, as his father had done when he took counsel of the thoughtful, hardworking mother. And he hoped his son might do the same, however fast their wealth accumulated. He had seen fortunes greater than his made in his own generation, and flung away by the next already; and not the wealth only lost, but the moral qualities which had gone with it. He could see the worth of these moral qualities from a conservative point of view, though not from a progressive one.

The interview ended in an appointment for an early day, when Mr. Palmer was to bring Nelly to Miss Macnaughten's house in Kensington, where she might be duly inspected and accepted, if approved.

CHAPTER X.

BEGINNINGS.

"There's a great deal in making a good beginning," was a maxim of Miss Macnaughten's. "If you once get into wrong relations with people, it is ten chances to one if you are ever able to set them to rights." She quoted herself thus with regard to Nelly, for it need hardly be said that Nelly had met with Miss Macnaughten's entire approval. Approval is far too cold a word for the enthusiastic account of her new charge which she carried home to her nieces, who had hitherto been by no means eager for her advent. Miss Macnaughten did not possess the national reserve. Mr. Palmer had not thought it necessary to insist upon it in regard to Nelly's engagement; and so she told the whole story to her dear girls, insisting, however, upon the necessity of reserve on their parts.

"It is quite a romance," said Grace Macnaughten.

"I wonder how it will turn out," said her sister Jane.

"I know I should not like it for either of you," said the aunt. "I do not think any wise mother would like it for her daughter; so much may take place in two years."

"I shouldn't like it myself," said Jane. "Ridiculous nonsense! What if they should change their minds?"

Grace said nothing. She was prepared now to make much of Nelly.

Jane and Grace Macnaughten were good affec-

tionate girls enough. They had profited immensely by the careful training bestowed upon them by their aunt; but they were not formed by nature to illustrate it. Without it they certainly would have been rather frivolous than otherwise. The eldest, Jane, had the least head as well as the least heart, though she was superficially the clever one. She was also decidedly pretty, some might even think her beautiful, with her clear dark skin, great dark eyes, and long black hair. She looked best in evening costume, which brought out the dazzling points of her face, in which excitement heightened the glow and sparkle. Grace was not so bright; but she answered to her name. There was something fawn-like about her slender figure and soft eyes. She was a more general favourite than Jane with friends of her own sex.

Miss Macnaughten took her nieces into society. She considered it a kind of duty to do so. She liked it, and profited by it herself, and she was resolved that they should do the same. Her set was a very pleasant one. She and her brother, the father of Jane and Grace, were the children of a Scotch proprietor, who had been afflicted with a mining mania, and had sunk his property in the depths of the earth. His son, left almost penniless, had gone abroad, and had already accumulated a sufficient fortune. His daughter had provided for herself till her nieces and nephews had been placed under her care. She intended to provide for herself still, notwithstanding her brother's remonstrances. She had always believed that he would marry again, and she believed it still, for he was not yet an old man. She was a woman bent on making the best of everything. She was as wise as the wisdom of this world could make her—wise and gracious too. She could not have lived for self, and one of her most constant lessons was the impossibility of being happy in so living.

"Usefulness is the only happiness," she would say, and she lived up to her maxim. She demanded diligence from her charges, as fitting them for future usefulness. And her idea of that was a very good one as far as it went. She would have everybody clean and healthy and happy. All children well fed, and well taught, and well washed; and she held it to be everybody's business to see to this as far as in them lay. The doctrine of non-interference she could not abide. Nobody ought to have their own way, if that way was manifestly not good for them.

It was under this rule that Nelly came: into this household, well-ordered, tranquil, liberal, graceful. It was such a change, such a contrast, that it sufficed at first to employ her mind and divert her thoughts almost entirely from herself. Everything was new to her. The very multiplicity of objects in the rooms occupied her mind for the first few days.

Miss Macnaughten had determined that she should have time to become acquainted with her surroundings; that, indeed, she should long for some definite task before it was set before her. So Jane and Grace brought out their well-filled portfolios and showed her their drawings—Jane sketching heads cleverly, Grace painting in water colours with a good deal of taste and delicacy, but with little power. In the morning they walked in the gardens, Miss Macnaughten holding forth on the plants and flowers like the accomplished botanist she was. Or else they visited the Museum with the great and beautifully arranged historical collection then within its walls; and the historical allusions made, showed Nelly her ignorance and inspired her with the longing for knowledge—a longing which she could gratify at will in Miss Macnaughten's small but well-selected library.

But Nelly seemed to grow more pensive as the days went by, and to shrink more and more into herself. Jane and Grace were terribly disappointed in their new companion. She disappointed Jane's curiosity and Grace's fondness for a little gushing sentiment. She had never once spoken of herself, though they had tried to draw her out in a variety of ways. They had told her all their own little history.

"We were born in India," said Grace, in one of their one-sided confidences. "Mamma died there soon after we had been sent home. We have a photograph of her taken after her death."

Jane fetched the case. Nelly looked with a thrill of awe. It was the picture of a lovely young lady lying as if asleep. The drapery of death, the sealed eyelids, on which the faithful sun-painter had marked something more solemn than sleep, gave a strange pathetic interest to the little portrait. Tears were in Nelly's eyes as she handed it back to them. Grace kissed her.

"We do not remember her," said Jane.

"And your father is still abroad," said Nelly.

"He has come over to see us twice, and next year he is coming home altogether," said Grace, adding lightly, "I hope he will not marry again, as aunty is always imagining he will."

"I could not endure a stepmother," said Jane, bitterly.

"And I am sure he will not give us one," said Grace. "I was only jesting. He loves us too well. He never denies us anything," she continued, addressing herself to Nelly; "and so we are obliged to deny ourselves a little. Is it long since your father died?"

Nelly gave the date and nothing more. There are sorrows worse than death. These kept her dumb. As for her joy, it lay in her heart like a locked-up treasure of which some one had stolen the key.

How long the days seemed now, that used to be so short, too short for all that was to be done in them. The only time that passed with wings as of old, was the afternoon twice a week which she spent with her mother, who was settled comfortably near her. Then each to please the other assumed almost uncon-

sciously more of happiness than she felt, or rather Nelly did so, for her mother was simply at peace. Her heart was worn out. No hope made her restless; no fears disturbed her.

"Are you happy, mamma?" Nelly would say, when misgiving, born of her own doubtful heart, would seize upon her, and she would answer—

"I am very comfortable, child, and glad to think that you will be happy."

It was reassuring, and yet she was not reassured.

"When the time has come," she said to herself, "I will ask Harry to let me have my mother at home with us, then we shall be happy—'when the time has come;'" and she sighed, and looked at the ring.

It used to change colour as she looked, and Nelly trembled before her hidden treasure of happiness as if it might turn to dust and ashes before it was unlocked to her.

There was one other portion of her time that Nelly thought too short, and that was the Sunday mornings. Miss Macnaughten took her young ladies to church, not to the fashionable church in the neighbourhood, crowded with new bonnets, but to one at a considerable distance, within whose walls ministered one of the great preachers of the day, a man whose words had a supreme power over those who could understand him. How any one could fail to understand him was the mystery, for his language was the simplest that ever fell from human lips. It was just because it was so simple that it was misunderstood.

The gay bonnets in that congregation were few and far between. It consisted neither of the very young nor the very old. The men and women there were middle-aged, with grave and thoughtful faces, not a few lighted up with the light of genius. There were faces worn with struggle, and yet sanctified by peace like that of the preacher himself. Nelly, who had lived and suffered, hung upon his lips. He lifted her into a new and congenial atmosphere. She had never breathed the like before. Her father, in spite of his fall, had had true religious feeling; but, perhaps, because of that fall, he had almost banished religion from his home. Besides, his had been a religion of fear. Here the message of the preacher was of love; but it was of a love that must cast out not only fear, but sin. It was a love, too, that embraced all men and the whole life of man. Self-culture was being set before Nelly as a great end; but he made it seem to her only a great means towards the end of living out this highest life of love.

And still she grew more and more thoughtful, till her gentle loveliness became almost severe in expression. She could not help thinking of the women among whom she had worked, and contrasting their hard unlovely lives with the lives of the circle into which she had entered, and yet to these last there was something wanting. Was it the power to help those others? Would she be able to help them in the future? Would he help her to help them? How she longed that he should share the new light which was dawning upon her; but between him and her stood those two years with their intolerable silence. Miss Macnaughten saw how grave she looked, and thought it was the gravity caused by former sorrows; she did not know how bright and cheerful Nelly had been in adversity, and she thought the shadow would pass away in time, especially when she began to induct her into a regular course of study. This she had been in no haste to do, partly that Nelly might have time to feel her own deficiencies, and partly because it was the holiday season. The Macnaughtens were not going anywhere this autumn, because they had spent the spring in Paris; but they took several excursions into the country in the neighbourhood of London, taking Nelly with them, and making her acquainted with many an historical scene. So the autumn days went by, till at last Miss Macnaughten said, "It is time to begin work; let us commence to-morrow, the first of October."

And so Nelly began to grind at grammar—to learn her French and German verbs and write her exercises, all of which she did with satisfaction to her teacher. "She has a splendid intellect," said Miss Macnaughten, surprised at some of Nelly's feats in the linguistic line. Then, as the evenings drew in, they read aloud by turns the best books of the day. All the most advanced thought of Europe, in some shape or other, came to the ears of Nelly as she listened to what went on in the pretty morning-room, in which they usually sat. It was a little diluted, perhaps, Miss Macnaughten acting as a kind of patent digester, but Nelly became a devourer of books on her own account Thus her mental growth was rapid; while deep down in her heart, like a seed hidden in the ground, was growing the root of a love strong as death. That ordeal, imposed by an arbitrary will, under which a lighter nature would have failed, was just the ordeal to exalt Nelly's simple regard for her lover into a great passion of tenderness, all the more passionate that it was purely ideal. She lost sight of the real Harry Palmer, and substituted in his place something that Harry Palmer was not, if he ever could be, the creature of a high and pure imagination. She had parted with him when he was under a temporary exaltation, which made him appear almost as she thought of him. Meantime what was his life?

CHAPTER XI.

A BAD SET.

Mrs. Jobson took an early opportunity to call on the Palmers, incited thereto by her husband, but quite willing on her own part to go anywhere that promised a day's outing, especially when her husband

was so good as to lend her his handsome little chaise and fast-trotting horse, and well-appointed groom. So she set off from Bloomsbury Square after lunch, and reached Hackney early in the afternoon, in high spirits, which she manifested by hastening up to Anne as if she had been her dearest friend, and holding up her little crimson mouth to be kissed. She would have done the same by Patricia, who, however, met her advances with a formal, stately bow.

"What a pretty garden!" she exclaimed, running to the window. "I should not have thought you had such a nice one here."

Anne hardly knew what to say to her. Patricia's stiffness told on her sister a great deal more than on her visitor. Mrs. Jobson made herself at home at once. She looked at everything in the room with the most open childish curiosity, and chattered away quite freely. She had not much natural vivacity, but she was quite impervious to any snubbing conveyed by manner, and so Patricia's stiffness and stateliness were completely lost upon her. After examining and discussing the albums, &c., Anne took her out into the garden, and got a few flowers for her, and before the interview was over, she was begging her to come and spend a day in Bloomsbury Square and bring her sister with her. Anne was glad that Patricia had not heard the invitation.

"You will come, won't you, dear?" she said at parting, and Anne hastened, in her good-natured way, to answer in the affirmative, quite fearful of Patricia administering any further snubbing.

"How can you be so silly, Anne," said her sister, when the visitor was gone, "as to encourage such a little fool?"

"Poor little thing," said Anne pityingly; "she can't help being a fool, and we have not so many visitors as to make her coming a bore; besides, we live so far from her that it is not likely she will trouble us often. And, you know, I think we are bound to be kind to those we come in contact with, whether we like them particularly or not."

"I don't agree with you. I think we ought to treat people exactly as they deserve to be treated."

Anne smiled a little sadly. "I don't know how people deserve to be treated, Pat; but did you not notice how beautiful the little creature looked in her black lace mantilla and bonnet? Did you ever see such a skin?"

"She is certainly pretty, as a doll may be pretty; but her face has about as much expression as if it was made of wax."

"I have promised to go to see her some day."

"Well then you must go," replied Patricia.

"I should like you to go with me. They are Harry's friends, and I think he would like it," said Anne.

"I am sorry that they are Harry's friends," replied her sister. "It is such a pity to get into a bad set. I would rather not know any one than have such friends as these. She is evidently vulgar as well as shallow, and you did not prepossess me in favour of her husband. I think I had better not go."

"She is a harmless little thing," pleaded Anne, "let us go and see her. I dare say that will end the matter."

But it did not end the matter. The sisters called in Bloomsbury Square. Mrs. Jobson called on them again and again, and at last there appeared an invitation to dinner, which came to be accepted thus.

Ever since the day of the flower-show there had been growing up between Harry Palmer and his favourite sister a wall of separation. Patricia felt it keenly, though too proud to acknowledge it even to herself. Anne watched it with anxiety and uneasiness. She knew the pride and self-will of both. Harry would not yield unless Patricia yielded, and Patricia would not give in unless Harry gave in, and so it had gone on, and might go on for ever, unless they could contrive to meet one another half-way. To Anne this dinner seemed the very thing to bring about a reconciliation between them; if she could only make it appear that Patricia went because they were his friends, Harry would be sure to consider that a sufficient concession. Besides, Anne had the burden of a secret on her mind, and wanted terribly to be rid of it. Patricia did not yet know of her brother's engagement—Anne did. She had not been told to keep it to herself—indeed, her brother had wished the very reverse; but Anne had kept it, out of her usual desire to escape giving pain, and every day and every hour only made it more difficult and more painful to tell. At the commencement of the estrangement between Patricia and Harry, Anne had been offered a very unusual share of her brother's attention, given to her partly to pique Patricia, and partly because there was no one else in the way. Anne had done everything in her power to put a stop to this. She hated to take another's place, and Patricia had always been Harry's friend and confident till now; and above all, she hated giving pain to a degree which made the suffering of the pain the lighter penalty. So when Harry communicated to her the fact of his engagement, in an offhand sort of way, good enough to hide his natural embarrassment from one so simple-minded as Anne, she said nothing about it to Patricia, who, she was sure, would be very much hurt at receiving the intelligence through a third person.

(To be continued.)

A WORD UPON SEEING LIFE.

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM.

PERHAPS no expression has been so completely emptied of its true meaning as this of "seeing life." In common parlance it too often means its very opposite—viz., seeing death. "What, old boy! have you never been to London yet?—has your guv'nor never franked you for a week to the great city. Have you never seen the music halls, the theatres, the dancing rooms? You don't know what life is yet!"

Alas! it sounds like a voice of deepest mockery, to those who understand what these things really are, and how completely the masquerade which meets the eye conceals the hollowness, the misery, the profligacy which are hidden behind. Life lies in true piety and simple pleasures—in home joys, in the fields of nature, and in pursuits and pleasures which are linked with the higher part of our being.

Who has not met many a miserable specimen of the humanity that has seen "life," and, seeing, has been duped and deceived by it? When the season of excitement has passed away—when what we may call the necromancy of the senses is over—how incapable is the heart of entering into simpler joys, and how the dull and leaden depression of the mind requires fresh stimulants to awaken its perverted powers again. One look at the countenances of those who, in the worst sense, have been seeing life, should warn the young from so perilous a vision: better see anything than life, if it is to lead to this.

But in a far different sense does the wise man of old speak of life. Solomon reminds us, after all his gay experience, that in one direction only is life to be found; he tells us to seek instruction—to lay fast hold of wisdom; for "SHE IS THY LIFE." This surely has an inspired lesson in it suited to us all. Yes. "To see life"—that is often the ambition of the young. Far away in the rural quietness there are hearts to-day longing for acquaintance with towns and cities. Reports reach them, now and then, of the brilliancy which pleasure casts over the evening hours, and of the large amount of life that is to be seen. It is often suggested to them that their own existence must be very dull: they may have work, friends, books, but they must sometimes be very dull—how they must long to see more of life. Thus the word has become a proverb. Men and women go to cities because there is plenty of *life* there. The opposite of life is thus, in an implied sense—solitude, meditation, thoughtfulness, quiet sobriety of heart and habit.

The next idea is to "enjoy life"—to adopt the French word *gai* into our language—to dance on as though nothing had happened even when a handwriting comes out on the wall, or a fellow-companion dies.

Life! I need not remark what a misuse there often is of a grand old word. How dishonoured is the very word which in the Old Testament is characteristic of man himself. God breathed into man the breath of life! Life!—something which speaks of the Being who made man, and the destiny which is prepared for him.

Solomon stands at the corner of the streets to arrest the steps of any who will listen to his words of wisdom. Especially has he counsels for the young. He has seen much: he has occupied a high watch-tower of observation. Many things he once thought life, he knows are not life now. But he is wiser than some philosophers. He does not deal in mere negations. He does not say, "Not this!—not this alone;" but he says, "Take fast hold of wisdom: she *is* thy life."

Man needs to *find* life! There can be little question of that: all schools of religious thought, with few exceptions, will agree in this. Men may differ in their explanations of the fact, but the fact itself they can but admit. Man has gone astray from God like a lost sheep—his nature is under the deathly power of sin. He needs to find life. Had his nature been unfallen—had his union with God been preserved unbroken—then any Bible history vouchsafed to man would have been some records of his walks in the garden, rather than his wanderings in the wilderness. The Bible would have been a child's history, rather than a sinner's guide. If man's *life* had been in the highest sense preserved, then had there been no need of Deuteronomy, and its laws; the book of Proverbs, and its ethics; the incarnation of Christ, with the seeking of the lost; the atonement of Christ, with its sacrifice for sin. The Bible throughout is addressed to men who "in Adam, have all died, and in Christ shall all be made alive:" Proverbs embodies the idea of life in WISDOM—true wisdom—the knowledge of God, which is eternal life. Christ is, of course, the wisdom of the New Testament: "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." To know him as a Revealer of God, as a Mediator between God and man, as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, as a Brother in our sorrows, a Friend in our necessities, our inner Lord and Judge—this is our life. Man needs to find life in him: all his virtues without Christ

are but surface growths—flowers on graves. To know him—by faith to lay hold on him—is to find life.

Man is thus, then, counselled by royal experience concerning wisdom. She is thy life. I say royal experience. There is great outspokenness in the inspired Solomon. It is wonderful, in an ordinary sense, how grateful we are for thorough honesty of speech. When we really know what a place is, what a person is, what a certain prospect is, how we appreciate the wisdom which told us! Now Solomon had a wide stretch of experience. Life and Solomon seem to go together. How richly was his table spread; how profusely was his palace decorated; how plumages of crimson, and green, and gold filled his aviaries; how the silver spray of fountains cooled his retreats; how the literature of generations was gathered together in his library; how crowds of attendants waited at his beck; how the delights of power crowned the pleasures of sense, and met in equal proportions in the life of a voluptuary and a king! Epicureanism might have triumphed there—not the popular gross idea of Epicureanism, but the idea as taught by its philosophers—the indulgence of the powers of happiness in a moderate degree; not so as to impair reason, or diminish life's day, but so as to sip from all cups of knowledge and sense. Yes; Solomon was before the philosophic theory, but he *was* Epicureanism before the philosophy began.

And what had it all come to? I do not know that it ever struck you as it has struck me; but it is all so very natural. He seems to be reading the memoranda of his own experience in pensive hours of regret. He seems wishful to warn others who may come after him, who may never have the possibilities of pleasure in their lives which he had in his, and to say to them, "Life is not there. There may be many things there—books, and fountains, and gardens, with which true life may exist; but *they* are not life in themselves. They *may* minister to a man's pleasure whose life is cut off from God—the living God." Men, however, little heed Solomon; they try the pilgrimage of vanity for themselves. Even inspired experience is put aside—a king's experience, whose glories even Sheba's queen journeyed far to see—even his! Still through the long centuries his voice sounds, and, thank God, is often heard. Wisdom—lay fast hold on her. She is thy life.

Man, however, hears a voice from a greater than Solomon concerning life.

I have no sympathy with those who suit inspiration to their taste, on the selective principle, which, whatever we may think of it in other departments of knowledge, we cannot safely apply to the word of God. The inspired word of God would be an exceedingly small quantity in the case of many who place their own taste as the loadstone, to draw out from the Scripture only what was like unto themselves.

Christ, however, the only-begotten Son of God, comes with a fulness of revelation greater than that of Solomon. It is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This is not so said of Solomon. His inspiration was complete and perfect, so far as his revelation went. But Christ is full of all the fulness of God.

Moreover, the one was an inspired teacher, whose history was frail and faulty. Christ's character was as heavenly as his inspiration. To take a bold illustration: a man's heart might be tempted to rise up and say to Solomon, "Well, you tried it all; and now that you have drained the cup of pleasure, and exhausted your life-energy, you say all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Just as in the fashionable world some lady, whose name has become a synonym for excessive gaiety, suddenly gives it all up, and becomes excessively severe on even the simple pleasures of other people." People are thus found who would have preferred the beauty of Solomon's sermons if they had not been prefaced by Solomon's sins. Doubtless their judgment is wrong; lives, by the grace of God, often take a sudden turn, and God himself makes use of their experience as a guide to others, and as a quickening power over them to redeem their misspent time. Still, think as men may, all I am concerned to do, after pleading for the perfect inspiration of Solomon, is to present the perfect holiness of Christ. How solemn and subdued all our feelings are in the presence of Christ! We know that he and the Father were one—that he was always pure, true, holy; that in him was no guile, no shortcoming, no sin. He tells us what life is. How wonderful his knowledge! He created all the powers and faculties of existence: there is no one of life's powers and possibilities that he does not understand. Before his gaze stretches the whole range of man's activities, and pursuits, and pleasures. What does he say of life?—why, that "man shall not live by bread alone;" that "the life is more than meat;" that to believe in Him is to live indeed.

Man, thus counselled, hears a response to this voice from his own historic experience.

Every one has a history lying behind him. It is good to turn over its pages at times. We may all learn from our yesterdays. Who is there that has not tried to find life outside of God? "This is thy life," says the sense of Advancement: "gird thy loins, outstrip thy fellows, gain thy goal." "This is thy reward," says eager Ambition: "build an altar to thine own self-glory." "This is thy life," says the instinct of human friendship and affection. Not that the true Scriptural idea of life

excludes these—nay, rather *includes* them—gives them their true place. We can see this in the book of Proverbs. There is beauty of character which shall charm others called "an ornament of grace;" there is duration of life on earth—"The years of thy life shall be many;" there is honour amongst men—"Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour." Thus, step by step, we are led on to see the beauty and glory of true religion, until life in its *immortal* elements is brought before us, and we read of a life-path that shall shine more and more unto the perfect day. And does not our experience testify to this—that we fall short of true life, when we fall short of God? Love to him does not indeed exclude other love, or other service; but there is no true life until we embrace him. We need not despair if we do not realise all the new life's fervour and fulness at once. Wisdom, earthly or heavenly, will not be full-blown in a day; like all life, it will have its developing era; but it *is* life. Our history tells us if we have ever had it; our conscience tells us if we have it *now*.

"Take *fast* hold on her." Why? Because a light hold of religion is of little use. You have to follow on through bush and brake and thorny road, right on. The way is so difficult, so full of self-denials and battles, that if you do not take fast hold, wisdom will be too earnest for you. I do not know that a light grasp is of much use in anything. Many of us have known those who coquette with art, science, and even business: they never take fast hold, the consequence is, inefficiency, and in time indifference. So it is in religion. Take fast hold. Christ is earnest, so must we be. We shall never follow him unless we are. Let not wisdom go! Surely that implies that certain evil influences from without will be tugging and straining at our heart-strings; that certain tempting faces will be following us out of Egypt, and at every fresh halting-place will be trying their witchery upon us. Our only safety is not to let wisdom go. It is hard enough to keep up with her. If she goes on, how difficult to reach her then. The soldier who drops by the wayside, faint or weary, seldom catches the cavalcade again. Wisdom must lead *us*. Some people try to coax wisdom their way, as children do their guides; but it must not be. Wisdom says, "*This* way, Monday and Sunday too; no chicanery, no trickery: you will have an uneasy conscience ere long. If you act the false, you will lose your *life*." Wisdom says, "This way; not the way of the fleshly and sensual: you must live spiritual lives, as well as sing spiritual songs. Take care, lest you lose your life." It is easy to philosophise about religion; easy to talk of the "true, the beautiful, and the good;" easy to picture the Christian pilgrimage, but difficult to tread it. Still, here is our life, a life-companionship with Christ; this is our life. For this the Comforter descends—that we may abide in Christ.

So wisdom takes us along the narrow way, we seeing from time to time the flashing eyes of Egyptian faces, and the beckoning fingers of Egyptian forms that are following us out into the wilderness, whilst borne to our ears are soft whispers that half charm us to return. Now or never, we must be resolute. Wisdom is hastening on—we with her. Tighter and still tighter our grasp. No dallying now, we are earnest men and women. We do not mean to lose salvation by dull indifference, or by Egyptian trickeries. No! It is difficult to keep the narrow path at all. But we are not alone. The wisdom of the New Testament is *Christ*: all its treasures are hid in him. We take fast hold of him, and yet not half so fast as he takes hold on us. We are pressing on now. The gay palaces, the glittering fanes, the sweet charmers of Egypt, are behind us now—farther, yet farther. We press on with Christ—still on; our temptations he meetens us for, our sorrows he sympathises with, our hopes he deepens and brightens; and when the red light streaks the distant horizon he bids us look—still look, till the walls, and battlements, and crystal heights of the New Jerusalem come out within the view of faith, and bidding us be of good cheer, he says: "If ye suffer with me, ye shall also reign with me. I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me. In your patience possess ye your souls. He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, and then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father."

A PRAYER.

DEAR Lord, that I might make my days
Holy to Thee with acts of praise;
That every hour that joined my past
Might leave a memory fit to last;
That every moment white might be
With wish or deed that Thou wouldst see;
So might my life with quiet breath,
Thy perfect peace, steal on to death.

Oh, wisdom beyond wisdom wise,
That heaven and not vain earth supplies;
Oh, gain beyond all worldly gain,
That won to, proves nor false nor vain,
Glory, of simple goodness born,
That all, perchance, but God may scorn;
Vouchsafe, O Lord, these gifts to give,
And I, in sweet content, shall live.

W. C. BENNETT.

(*Drawn by* S. L. Fildes.)

"He found himself in a bright little parlour."—*p.* 458.

DIVIDED LIVES.

IN TWO PARTS. BY ALTON CLYDE, AUTHOR OF "UNDER FOOT," ETC. ETC.

PART I.—CHOOSING BETWEEN THEM.

THE old church was filled with the sound of the great organ, though it was not service-time, and there were no listeners to drink in the flood of music that swelled through the aisles; no listeners except the stolid, white-haired youth from the village, whose sturdy arms did duty at the bellows, and the pale, high-browed organist, who, making use of the privilege accorded to him by his master, the good old rector, had taken the keys and shut himself in the church for a few hours' solitary practising.

Caleb Crossland could not be content to be only an efficient organist, and the interpreter of other minds. It was his ambition to win for himself a place in the charmed ranks of the masters of his art; and he had already tried his hand successfully at some high-class compositions in church music.

There he sat, with his slightly bent head, catching the light from one of the painted windows, which seemed a blaze of crimson and gold, as the setting sun streamed through, falling in warm touches on the tablet-lined walls, and enriching, with the same gorgeous colouring, some of the dark antique pews. But all this was lost upon the rapt senses of the musician, as his long white fingers swept the keys, flinging off bar after bar of wonderful notes.

Unregarded by him, the golden sunset faded, and the evening shadows fell, yet still he played on, until suddenly some recollection of the flight of time seemed to flash upon his mind; for he rose hurriedly, looked at his watch, and began collecting his rolls of MS. music, a shade of vexation resting on his face, as he murmured, "Behind time as usual. My poor Ruth, it will look as if I always made her second. Come, Martin, my boy, you have had a long spell to-night, and must be tired."

This was a view of the subject which his rustic satellite endorsed with sundry highly expressive smiles and chuckles of relief.

Half an hour later, the young organist, flushed and almost breathless from his rapid walk through the village, presented himself at the door of a pretty detached cottage, so situated in the midst of a large old-fashioned garden that it looked as though it meant to shrink away from the road, and hide behind the wall of green verdure made by the spreading fruit-trees.

Glancing at one of the parlour windows, as he passed, the young man fancied he saw a fair face bending over the stand of geraniums; but he had not the chance to satisfy himself concerning the reality of the vision, for when he reached the steps it was gone.

His low knock was answered by a neat little servant, whom he followed without ceremony, and found himself in a bright little parlour and in the midst of a quiet home circle, where he was always sure of a kindly welcome.

The family consisted of a father and mother and their only daughter, Ruth, a beautiful girl of twenty, the last survivor of a numerous family, who had all died in childhood. Mr. Ellis had formerly carried on a thriving business in a neighbouring town; but about two years ago, failing health had obliged him to retire on his savings. It was only a modest income, but so far it had proved amply sufficient for their wants. There were times when a shadow of anxiety would gloom over the old man's face, as he thought of Ruth and her future; but he invariably turned to his favourite chapter—"Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin;" and then he was content to leave all in the Father's hands. Yet none knew how many unspoken prayers went up for that gentle girl, the cherished child of their old age.

It was to the dove of this sheltered nest that Caleb Crossland, the organist, had turned his grave, observant eyes. After submitting to the most searching investigation of his character and antecedents by the old people, he was at length rewarded by being placed among the very few who were received at their cottage as intimate friends. He esteemed this the dearest privilege that could have been granted him; for he had given his heart to Ruth Ellis, the maiden of the soft voice and shy, brown eyes; and in those days he loved, or he believed he loved her, dearer than anything else in the world.

Before he took his accustomed seat on the sofa, Caleb's eyes flashed a satisfied glance round the room so pleasant to look at, with its cool, white muslin curtains, its carefully arranged books and flowers, with the pretty accessories of crochet work, and other attractive trifles, for which it would be puzzling to find a name.

The supper-things were waiting on a side table; the meal had been delayed, and Caleb, who knew the early habits of the household, had a guilty consciousness that it was on his account.

"How do, Caleb?" said old Mr. Ellis, giving the young man a beaming smile of welcome over the top of his newspaper. "I began to think you

didn't mean to come round and shake hands with us to-night. Ruth, tell Patty to come and lay the cloth."

When the homely supper was over, Caleb found by his watch that he had little more than half an hour to prolong his visit. Ruth had quietly resumed her needle, and he sat opposite to her, finding much pleasure in following with his eyes the motion of her fingers, and watching the animated play of expression on the face that was growing so dear to him.

The old people were holding a good-humoured argument about the approaching election, and the relative merits of the rival candidates for their county; but that discussion gained no attention from the visitor. His chief anxiety just then was to discover whether Ruth Ellis was much disappointed that he had not kept his promise, and come in time to have the pleasant stroll in the garden, which had been agreed upon between them. Very earnestly he scanned the sweet, tranquil face, which told him nothing to satisfy his doubt; for there was now no trace of the shadow which had rested there that evening, nor the look of wistfulness that she had worn while she sat sewing, dutifully answering when her father or mother spoke, but all the time listening for his step on the gravel. But the lover guessed nothing of this, not even when he held her hand in his at parting, and whispered his apology—

"I am sorry I was behind time, Ruth; but I was up at the church practising, and I——"

"Forgot the hour," she put in gently, adding, with a little fluttering sigh that she could not keep down, "I suppose you could not help it, Caleb."

The old couple sat talking late that night, after Ruth and the little servant had gone to bed.

"John," said Mrs. Ellis, with moistening eyes, suddenly breaking a pause in their talk, "I've just been thinking."

"Well, dame, let me hear what about."

"Our Ruth, and the blessing it is that she has found some one to take care of her before we go away. Caleb seems like our son already, and I take to him more every time he comes."

"Yes," assented the old man, thoughtfully rubbing his chin, "Caleb is well enough; but——"

His wife caught the doubtful tone, and, in defence of her favourite, pounced at once upon the objectionable word.

"What need to put a 'but' in the case, John? You've nothing against Caleb Crossland."

"Well, no; he's a good young fellow enough, and perhaps it's all my old-fashioned notions; but I should be better pleased if he wasn't so much wrapped up in his music, and if he'd a good everyday trade in his fingers."

The old lady said little in reply; but she wrinkled her benevolent face in perplexed musing over this new view of the subject, which had given an unpleasant turn to her thoughts.

* * * * * *

Caleb Crossland walked slowly home in the tranquil starlight, taking with him, as he always did after those evenings at the cottage, a vivid impression of Ruth's gentleness and sweetness, thinking how happy it would be for him to secure a home like the one he had left, and have just such a bright fireside of his own, with Ruth Ellis as the presiding spirit, to keep near him always.

But, alas for the consistency of such dreamers, even with those pleasant thoughts to keep him company, and make him linger by the way, it is doubtful that he would have quickened his leisurely steps, if he had known what fortune was about to cast at his feet; for a large, important-looking letter, addressed to him, and bearing a foreign postmark, was then waiting at his lodgings.

His landlady had considerately lighted his lamp. When he came in, the first object on which his glance fell was the letter. He seized it hurriedly, his hands trembling, and his pale face catching a bright streak of colour in the eagerness of expectation, murmuring, "Berlin, and from Uncle James."

He tore open the cover, and uttered an exclamation of surprise as a second letter fell out on the floor. Its envelope was inscribed in a bold, dashing hand, and stamped with initials and a coronet. The flush deepened on the young man's face, as he picked it up and read the brief but expressive missive, which he could not quite understand until he had referred to the more lengthy epistle from Uncle James.

A few words will suffice to explain to the reader all that is needful to know. James Crossland, the uncle of the young organist, and the only near relative whom he had living, was tutor and travelling companion to the invalid son of an earl, who was said to be warmly attached to him. They were as usual away from England, having settled for a time at Berlin. Knowing his uncle to be interested in the career he had chosen (for the tutor had musical tastes, and was himself no mean proficient in the art), Caleb had applied to him for advice in the direction of his efforts for success, confiding to him in fervid letters, his ambitious longings to achieve fame.

More than six months had passed without giving him an answer, and he deemed himself forgotten, until this evening brought him an unexpected proof of the contrary; for the uncle had not contented himself with merely remembering his nephew, of whose talents he was beginning to be proud, he had succeeded in securing for the young man the interest of his titled patron; and the result was the piece of good fortune communicated in the letter—the offer of an appointment as

organist at an English church in Berlin, with double the amount of his present modest salary. He would also have the advantage of attendance at one of the great colleges of music, and would thus be able to push forward his studies as a composer in a way that he could never hope to do if he stayed dreaming out his life in that quiet village. No wonder that the pale brow flushed, and the pulse beat high with excitement. One of the golden opportunities for which he had longed was at last within reach of his hand, and already, in anticipation, he was reaping the proud harvest of honour, which he hoped would be his. Of course, he must accept; there could be no hesitation about the answer to be sent to the courteous nobleman, who had befriended him for his uncle's sake.

But there was Ruth Ellis; strange that the thought of her had not crossed his mind before. Stranger still that it should fall there like a shadow as of something that mixed pain with pleasure, and dimmed some of the glow of promise which was already gilding the future for him. How would poor Ruth bear the parting, and how could he find courage to tell her? He knew that the old people would never consent to let their child find her home in a distant land, even if his position would leave him free to marry, of which he had a doubt. This recalled a paragraph in his uncle's letter, which he now took up and re-read with wildly-throbbing heart.

"Believe me, Caleb, I am very glad to be the means of helping you on, the rest will chiefly depend upon yourself; but you have many chances in your favour—you are unmarried and free from ties that might prove a fetter on your advancement. In that, you are wiser than your father was, and I have greater hope for you. Quite time enough to think of marrying when you have made your way."

At this point the reader stopped. Already the struggle had begun, and he knew that he must choose between them. On one side, Ruth Ellis and the peaceful village home of which he had dreamed that night; on the other, a brilliant future and the applause of men. He could foresee the end of the strife; that he would leave behind the sunshine of the valley, and pass on to the new life and the eager up-hill climbing that led to the goal which he had fixed for himself.

But through all, there came a keen sense of pain, and he murmured Ruth's name with almost piteous tenderness, yet he had no thought of foregoing the sacrifice, or saying no to his uncle's offer.

Dear Ruth, sleeping so tranquilly through that summer night, with a smile on her lips, like the light of a happy dream; there was no foreshadowing to her of the trial that was preparing for the morrow.

One week later, and Caleb Crossland had got through most of the unpleasant task which his change of prospects had devolved upon him. The letter of acceptance had been written, and Ruth Ellis knew that he was going.

The old people were at first dumb with astonishment at the news, scarcely knowing whether to be sorry or glad. But after a time the father drew his wrinkled hand hurriedly across his eyes, and looked at Ruth with a pitying wistfulness that his wife did not understand, until he said, in a low tone—

"Wife, this will be hard upon her; it brings my words true. I said he was too much wrapped up in his music. A woman should be all in all to the man she cares for. I wish now that our girl had never seen him."

The intervening time passed so rapidly that the eve of his departure came before Caleb Crossland had steeled his heart for the wrench of separation; but he consoled himself with the thought that Ruth bore it very well, and did not seem to make his going so much a grief after all.

He was far from guessing the truth, that Ruth's calmness was only assumed for the occasion, and that unfortunate paragraph in his uncle's letter was answerable for all. He had given it her to read, utterly forgetting that it contained anything to hurt a sensitive woman's pride.

Yet, so it was; Ruth carried those words in her memory, and often wept over them in the privacy of her own room. They came between her and Caleb at the last, and kept her firm to the decision she had made.

"I will not let him bind himself by any promise to me; for I will never be a fetter on his advancement."

This was said with unfaltering lips and a resolute look in her brown eyes, that Caleb had never seen there. It was the evening of their leave-taking. He was holding Ruth's hand in both his own; but it lay very passively in his clasp, and though her face was pale, there were no traces of tears. His heart swelled; this parting was a bitter thing to him. During the last few days Ruth seemed to have grown doubly dear, and the conflict of opposing feelings waged so fiercely that there were times when he wished he had remained the village organist, and let the tide of fame and fortune pass on its way without him. But it was too late now; he had chosen his path.

He had prepared for a hard task in soothing Ruth, and now when the hour was come she seemed to bear it better than himself. He tried to think it was better so, yet could not help feeling hurt and disappointed at her manner.

"I did all for the best, Ruth," he said, with an undertone of anguish in his voice that reached

the listener's heart, and almost overthrew her self-control. "It was one of the chances that seldom come twice in a man's lifetime, and I thought it right to take it. You do not blame me, Ruth; say that you do not."

He waited anxiously for her reply, which was given in a low, steady tone. His agitation caught no visible response from the pale, quiet girl.

"No, Caleb, I do not blame you; for I know well you could not have helped going if you had tried."

His fine eyes searched hers, with a look half distrustful of her meaning. He resumed, "After all, it will be for us only a question of waiting, and the end will be our reward. Ruth, you cannot doubt my love, for you know that I shall never care for another woman in the world as I care for you."

She felt that he spoke the truth, but she had also a sorrowful consciousness that the love of which he spoke, was "of his life a thing apart." Then came back the recollection of the cold, practical, worldly wisdom of his uncle's letter, closing her heart, and strengthening her against giving way at the last.

So Ruth let him go, and after they had parted at the gate, she stole back to the shadow of the little summer-house, and sat there sobbing with her face buried in her hands. "He is gone, and there will be nothing now 'to fetter his advancement.' Well, perhaps it is for the best."

THE LITTLE SPY.

"EDDIE, do like a good boy go out and play in the garden. It is very tiresome having a child always in the room, listening to every word one says."

Eddie, to whom his sister Agnes addressed these words, had gained the name of "The Little Spy," because he was renowned in the family for spying and prying, and had an insatiable curiosity about the affairs of others.

The subject on which Agnes wished to converse with her sister Mary on the present occasion, was a plan—of which her mother had informed her lately—of spending a few weeks by the sea-side during the summer holidays. Eddie had got an inkling of the matter, and his curiosity was now on the alert. A very bright idea occurred to him. This was to hide himself somewhere in his sisters' room before they went to bed, that he might overhear their conversation; for curiosity led this little boy into very dishonourable practices, and now that he had formed the scheme, he was impatient for the time to put it in execution. When bed-time arrived the young spy said good night to all the party, and retired as usual, intending to sit up until the house was quiet. But when the nurse took away his light all his designs seemed frustrated, for the silly boy was quite afraid to walk about in the dark. However, curiosity prevailed over his fears, and he resolved to make another effort. Knowing that there was a box of matches on the table belonging to one of his brothers, he took courage to feel for it, and drawing on some of his clothes, crept, in much haste and trepidation, to his sisters' apartment. Very much rejoiced was he to find that the fire had been already lighted.

"I shall not be obliged to strike a match now," he thought.

Thrusting a piece of paper between the bars, he saw by the flame, a press (which was fixed in a recess of the wall) a little open. He slipped stealthily in, drawing the door closely shut after him, and crouching at the bottom, settled himself down comfortably, taking care to shelter under some muffles which hung at one side, in case his sisters should have occasion to open the press.

For a considerable length of time he strained his ears to catch the first sound of approaching footsteps, not being aware that, after he had gone up-stairs, some friends had arrived, and were spending the evening with the family, which circumstance accounted for his sisters' keeping later hours than usual.

As he lay in his lurking-place, thus intently listening, he became conscious of a peculiar smell resembling burning wood, and remembered having previously heard a strange crackling sound which startled him a little at the time. Presently, feeling oppressed by a suffocating vapour, "Why, the room must be full of smoke," he said to himself; "I suppose the chimney does not draw well, and I only hope I shall not be choked. It is better to get up and see what is going on outside."

But he did not find it so easy to peep this time. "The little spy," for once, was fairly caught in a trap. It was impossible to open the door from the inside, although it had been shut so easily, and poor Eddie was indeed in a pitiable case. To have been subjected to protracted imprisonment and inevitable discovery, would have been sufficiently bad; but to be caged, as it were, in a room full of smoke and flames, was truly a fearful fate. And such in reality was the state of things; for the piece of paper that Eddie thrust between the bars fell out while still burning, and ignited the box of matches which he had carelessly thrown on the fender and neglected to remove. While this explosion was taking place, Eddie was ensconcing himself

snugly under the cloaks and shawls which hung within the wardrobe, and as the door was tightly shut, the sound, that he had mistaken for the crackling of coals in the grate, only reached him in a muffled way.

Some clothes had been hung in front of the fire to air, which were, of course, speedily caught by the blaze. From them it spread to the horse on which they had been placed, then to a neighbouring chair, and by degrees to the boards of the room. It was only at this advanced stage of the conflagration that Eddie became aware of what was going on, for the lighter fabrics had produced more flames than smoke.

As soon as the unfortunate boy was convinced that he had no way of escape, his terror was intense. He knocked and screamed, but all in vain.

"Oh!" he cried at last, "if God will only bring me out of this trouble, I shall ask him to make me love and serve him all my life."

Then, for the first time, he prayed fervently to be helped and delivered from this danger, and lay down more calmly, feeling much comforted, and awaiting the answer which he fully expected would be sent to his prayer.

Meantime, Agnes and Mary were enjoying the society of their young companions below-stairs, quite unconscious of the terrible situation in which their brother was placed. Frederick and Robert also sat up beyond the usual bed-time, for the purpose of escorting their friends home. When the hour for departure arrived, the party set off together; but before they had proceeded far their attention was attracted by the whining of a dog.

"'Tis Carlo," said Robert; "poor fellow, he must be locked up in the yard, and probably hears us go out without him. Wait a moment, and I will run and fetch him;" and turning back, he hastened towards the yard in order to release his favourite, but had only proceeded a few steps when he perceived a glare of light from the window of his sisters' room. Calling after his companions, he exclaimed, "Did you ever see such a blaze? the girls must have a jolly good fire to-night!"

"That is more than a good fire," replied Frederick; "let us go back to the house, I fear there is something wrong."

Accordingly they all turned, and Frederick, running on before, gained the sitting-room first, exclaiming, "Oh, papa! the girls' room must be on fire!"

Then followed a general rush up the stairs, and the poor little imprisoned spy had the joy of hearing them approach, just as he had given himself up for lost, and was already beginning to feel some of the torments which threatened him. Terror, pain, and exhaustion rendered him so weak, that it was with difficulty he succeeded in rousing himself sufficiently to utter one piercing cry.

"Some one must be in the room amongst the flames," exclaimed Mrs. Brankton, as they burst open the door, and were greeted with a whole volume of smoke and flames.

There was no one visible within, yet surely they could not have imagined only they heard that terrible scream which still reverberated in their ears.

"Is any one there?" shouted Mr. Brankton.

Eddie heard, and with a last effort replied, "Oh! I am burning; let me out quickly, or I shall die!"

"'Tis Eddie's voice," cried Frederick; "where is he hidden?"

"The voice sounded from the wall," said Agnes.

"He must be locked in the press," shrieked the unhappy mother. "A ladder to the window is the only hope now."

Mr. Brankton and the boys, at once acting on this suggestion, ran to the yard and seized a ladder. Meantime Mrs. Brankton roused the household, who sought in vain by every effort to quench the fire and assist in the deliverance of the wretched captive. The father succeeded in ascending to the outside of the window, followed by Robert; but the flames by this time had spread rapidly, and the heat was intolerable. Still there was a clear passage left, which they quickly crossed, and flinging open the press-door, found the poor child almost suffocated and sadly scorched. Snatching him up, with much difficulty they succeeded in regaining the window, and descended in safety.

The fresh air partially restored Eddie's faculties, and it was a great consolation to his anxious parents to find that life was not extinct, as they had at first feared. But there was no possibility of saving the house, which was completely burned to the ground; and although some portions of valuable furniture, being in the lower rooms, were rescued, yet the loss of property to Mr. Brankton was considerable. However, he felt truly thankful that the lives of all his family were spared amidst so imminent a danger.

Eddie is now a grown-up man, remarkable for honourable and straightforward conduct, but there remains still on his forehead a fiery mark, which brands him through life as having formerly played the part of "the little spy." S. T. A. R.

"THE QUIVER" BIBLE CLASS.

205. What women are mentioned in the Bible as taking part in the religious services?

206. Of what were the three great festivals of the Mosaic law illustrative?

207. Of what were the looking-glasses made that are mentioned in Scripture?

208. Mention the name of the only female whose full age is given in the Bible.

209. Give instances to prove that our Lord's body, after his resurrection, though *material* (Luke xxiv. 42,) was endowed with other powers than it exercised before.

210. Why did Christ so forcibly press his per-

sonal identity on his disciples after his resurrection? Luke xxiv. 39.

211. What deduction does an apostle draw from Christ's resurrection?

212. Among the men born after the Flood, who attained the greatest age?

213. Upon what day in the week were the two greatest acts of Divine power that affected man accomplished?

214. What was the earliest generation in which a declaration of belief in the personal second coming of Christ was made?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 432.

189. Joel iii. 21.

190. David (Ps. lxxxv. 2, 3); Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii. 17).

191. He cannot lie; nor repent (1 Sam. xv. 29); nor deny himself (2 Tim. ii. 13).

192. Moses avenging the oppressed Hebrew, and succouring Jethro's daughters.

193. Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac to duty; Rebekah sacrificed truth and duty to her love for her son.

194. Retaliation by forgiveness (Rom. xii. 20).

195. 2 Kings xiii. 14, &c.

196. Mark vii. 34.

197. Thirteen times as seated, but only once as standing (Acts vii. 56).

198. John v. 7.

THE BAG OF BLESSINGS.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS. BY THE REV. P. B. POWER, M.A., AUTHOR OF "THE OILED FEATHER," "JOHN CLIPSTICK'S CLOCK," "THE 'I WILLS' OF THE PSALMS," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER V.

ALMOST of a sudden have we to tumble into sunshine, and blessing, and happiness, and a feast of fat things of every kind; and that is the reason why we commence a new chapter so soon. When everything is going to be new, the chapter must be the same, if it is to be at all in place, as every person with a well-regulated mind would wish it to be.

When Mrs. Taps heard the singing the night before, it was a solemn moment in the tailor's home. Long had little Jack lain in a sleeping state, and the question was, would he slumber into death? The crisis was at hand—"Sing to him," said Mrs. Patch, with her eyes full of tears—"sing if you can. If he dies 'twill be nice that the last sound he heard was the voice of praise." And with one look upward for strength, the tailor softly sang—

> "Safe in our Saviour's arms we lie,
> Safe if we live, safe if we die.
> Where else, O Saviour, would I be,
> Oh where so safe as when with thee?"

One verse only had he sung, when slowly, and as if to know where he was, little Jack opened his eyes—and then, after a moment's fixing them on his father, he smiled—it was only a wee little smile; but enough for a mother's eye—the crisis was passed—their boy would live.

Early in the morning the brewer's man, still looking quite unlike his former self, sent in his wife to know all about the Patches; and when he heard of what had happened the night before, he declared that Patch had sung the boy back to life; and stoutly to the end of his life did the brewer's man declare that that boy had never been prayed, but praised back into life.

"I don't want folk to talk to me," he used in after days to say; "folks as knows nothing of praise. I tell you prayer and praise is closer than first cousins—that they are—they're a'most twins, and they're that a-twisted one into the other, that 'tisn't every one can tell where the one ends and the other begins."

That morning was Saturday; and that evening Bill Taps brought home every penny of his wages—moreover, he came home early. And as the brewer's man put the money down on the table, he divided it with his great hand into two portions, one large and one small. And as his wife gazed at him with astonishment, he said, still wholly unlike his old self, "Wife, there's eight-and-twenty shillings—there's twelve for us and there's sixteen for the Patches—and no more can you have than twelve every week until that boy is strong and well; and they're all right again.

"And look you here," said the brewer's man—"d'ye see this five shillings? I got this to-day from an old customer of the master's, who never gave me a shilling before now. Now I've heard that sick folks eat chickens when they can get them; and you go and buy chickens with this, and take them to Mr. Patch; and," said the brewer's man after a moment's thought—"yes—say *I* sent them to him."

"And may I bring home Dot the child with me, to keep her out of the way?"

"You may."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Taps, "'tis the very thing he was singing about the time I heard him in the garden, when his song ended with 'The Lord will provide.' Well, now, who'd have believed it? only to think of the Lord hearing Patch about a bit of a baby like that! I wouldn't have believed

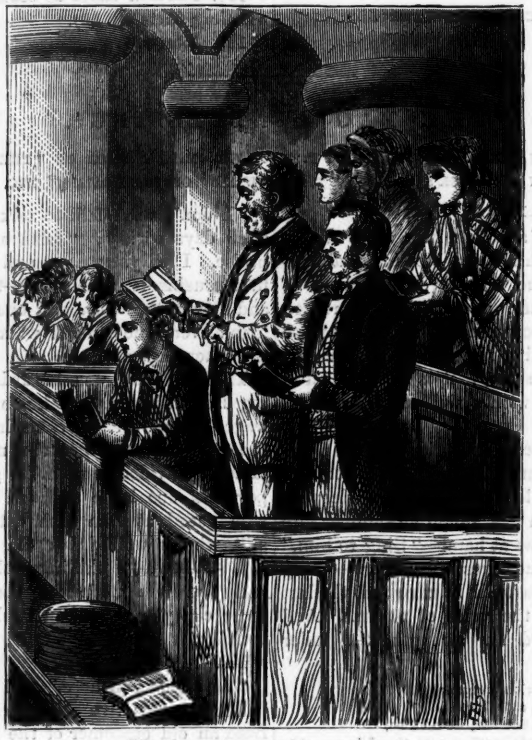
it, even if the parson had called a purpose to tell me of it; but now I've seed it—I have; and the Lord knew all about these chickens, and this Dot, when he heard that poor man saying—

'The Lord will provide.'

Well, if people would only open their eyes, they'd have to open their mouth too. Ay, they do open it no doubt, but 'tis always to put something in—seldom to bring out any praise, like our poor neighbour Patch. And if one goes into it," said Mrs. Taps, "this is downright mean to God, and it shan't be so with us any more. Here's chickens provided now, and Dot the child provided for; and nobody knows what will come next."

No—nobody did know, until it happened; and then, as is generally the case, every one knew. And what happened was this:

It came to the ears of the gentleman whose little boys had been ill, what terrible mischief had been wrought by the negligence of their nurse. Right well he rowed her up; and right well did she deserve it, and twice as much more, if she had got it; for she had done what in her lay to rob a poor man of his health, and trade, and children's lives.



"Patch sang tenor, and he sang bass."

"You should do unto others as you would wish they would do to you; and how should you like any one to come, and just for want of a little thought and precaution, to infect our children with the small-pox, or anything else? You must make conscience, Mrs. Worsted, of these things; if every one did this, disease would not be travelling all over the country as it is now. Things have come to this, that one can't get into a railway carriage or a cab and be sure that he shan't catch something before he comes out of it, and all because of people's selfishness and want of thought, and a little care—a little indeed! Why, I say no care is too much to prevent the spread of infection. And 'tis a wicked thing, for our own ease, or to save a few shillings, or for the sake of two or three days' time, to bring misery on nobody knows how many."

But Mr. Colthurst did more than blow up his nurse, he paid the tailor's doctor, and gave the family a handsome present beside; and moreover, being an army clothing contractor, he let John Patch have as much as he could do; until at last, he came to have twelve men under him, every one of them nearly twelve inches taller than himself. So he flourished, and like Job, his latter end was better than the beginning.

And Taps, the brewer's man, bought a hymn-book in course of time for himself; and he wore no clothes but what Patch made; and if he had his own way, he'd have had Patch make Mrs. Taps's clothes too; why shouldn't he? he couldn't make anything queerer for a woman, than what they made for themselves! And it became a serious question with him and his wife, as to whether Dot was not their own child, and it was all a mistake supposing that she belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Patch at all.

The brewer's man sang no more at the public-house—but loud and cheery his voice was heard in the house of God. Patch sang tenor, and he sang bass—and so the bag with the fever in it, which Mr. Taps once wished might be a bag of curses, was made the means of John Patch's prosperity to the end of his life, and the change in his neighbours' hearts and ways; and he and his tasted that joy often comes by sorrow; and that what seems to be for our ruin may be for our truest good; and that what we call a bag of curses, or of troubles, may, by honouring God, turn out in the end—"a Bag of Blessings."